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## People Profile: Maha Kumaran

Editor

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they are interested.<sup>9</sup> Other barriers to access for patrons include lack of proper software installed on their home desktop, expired or improperly processed user cards, or lack of knowledge about how to properly access a particular database.<sup>10</sup>

Respondents in our survey indicated that there are still many improvements that can be made to electronic access (see Table 1), and were typically in agreement with the written literature above. The largest concern among this group appears to be the lack of consistency in interfaces between the various publishers. Many felt that a seamless interface for both initial access and searching would be a considerable improvement over the current model. There was also a strong preference for standardization across many areas of electronic journal publishing including linking, controlled vocabularies, search terms, and indexing. It was interesting to note that while most of our respondents from academic libraries were in favor of IP access, special and other small libraries desired the ability to choose an access type based on their needs/budgets and felt that publishers were not being flexible enough. URL and linking problems were number three on the list, and again, many of our respondents called for greater standardization and more stability — stability not only with platforms, links and mode of access, but also stability on the vendors' part to keep their content in one database and not move them around so often.

The dilemma of ensuring future access to electronic material continues to challenge information managers, librarians, archivists, and the computer science community.<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, librarians are left wondering whether the electronic books, journals and information on CD, DVD or other storage media will last as long as printed paper or microfiche. Therefore, many continue to have hybrid collections of print and electronic materials just in case an adequate answer to this problem is never found. Many of our respondents commented that lack of permanence and access to archival content were still major barriers to an electronic only library.

### Education & Training

The complexities of granting and gaining access to electronic books and journals have also changed the skill sets needed to process and maintain these collections. This is true for both library employees and library users. While library patrons are expected to be information literates<sup>12</sup> and cultivated critical thinkers,<sup>13</sup> most do not need additional education to access the text of a print book or journal (unless, for example, it

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## against the grain people profile

### Maha Kumaran, M.A., MLIS

Information Professional  
44 Kirk Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7H 3B2

**NAME:** Maha (Iakshmi) Kumaran

**BORN & LIVED:** Born and raised in Chennai (Madras), India. I moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1994 with my husband. Since then I have lived and worked in three different provinces in Canada.

**EARLY LIFE:** I am the first of the two daughters and since my sister was only a year and a half younger, I always had a playmate. I was interested in sports, music and traditional Indian dance. I won certificates in Javelin, Kho Kho (<http://www.webindia123.com/sports/khokho/khokho.htm>) a game played only in India as far as I know. I also won singing, dance and drama competitions in school. I once wrote a poem which my sister took to school and published under her name. So I am not sure I can take much credit for it now.

**FAMILY:** I am now married to an English Professor who teaches at **St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan**. We have a five year old son who delights us.

**EDUCATION:** I have my masters in English from **Madras Christian College, Madras University** which is where the famous **S. R. Ranganathan** did his first degree. My bachelors was also in English Literature.

**FIRST JOB:** My first job was while I was still doing my Masters. I taught English as a Second Language to students of all ages in India. Later I was asked to teach first year English courses at the college where I did my BA.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** I have just finished my library degree. Before that I worked at three different academic libraries and one public library. I look forward to pursuing a professional career in the same field soon. I am also doing indexing work for the National Japanese Museum. Since I really enjoy indexing, I wouldn't mind a part time job in that field.

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Read newspapers, write articles, cook, play with my son and visit the public library with him.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *Intellectual* by **Steve Fuller**, biographies such as those of **Malcom X**, **Mahatma Gandhi**, **Winston Churchill**, *Pride and Prejudice* and other works by **Jane Austen**, **Shakespeare's** works, *God of Small Things* by **Arundathi Roy**, short stories of **Somerset Maugham**, works of **Mark Twain** — the list goes on and on.

**PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD:** When librarians refuse to understand each other (it happens sometimes) and get sarcastic with their comments. I really cannot stand people who refuse to look outside their own little world to learn something new.

**PHILOSOPHY:** Do your work and the rewards will come. Be true to yourself.

**MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** I started as a shelver in **Saskatoon Public Library** in 1995. That was my first real library job and sometime in my first month, I said to myself I have to get a degree and take on more challenges. I waited patiently for an opportunity and after almost nine years I was able to enroll in MLIS program at **UBC**. It was not easy to be a full-time student, part-time employee, live away from my husband and manage a 3 year old. When I finished my degree in July I was truly happy and satisfied that I had finally accomplished something. I hope to research, write and publish in my career.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Be a librarian in an academic or public library setting. Manage electronic information for a library, have my own Website up and running, continue working on my blog that is just born.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** I have written another paper on the future of libraries. I believe libraries always have a place in the future: their content and format will be different and they might also look different (if everything goes electronic). But in the next five years I see the industry coming up with better strategies to archive, access distribute electronic information through out the world, especially to the developing countries that cannot afford big publishers. I also truly hope that the idea of an electronic library doesn't stop with digitizing information but it goes beyond — to keep the idea of a community alive.

